

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MAY 1987

ONE DOLLAR



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

I was fixing my tie down effort on a canoe the other day in a parking lot in Richmond. It was the first time, believe it or not, that I had tied a canoe down by myself. I had gone into Hechingers to buy some reinforcement rope to help out the elastic cords which were hopelessly inadequate. While I was laboring with the ropes trying to remember any decent knot to use, a man walking by called out, "Need any help?" I smiled and shook my head. It was tempting. You see, when you're a female, you can usually get a lot of things done for you. Someone else paddles in the stern while you do the shooting on the fishing, someone else loads the boat for you, someone else puts you on the best deer stand. It isn't often that I have to do something for myself in the field. After all, it's a hassle for someone to have to wait for me to make a first-timer's mistakes, fix them, and then show me *again* how to do it right. It's much easier on a weekend when you're strapped for time to let somebody else do it for you; someone who is faster, better at it.

That's why I go into the woods by myself a lot these days. So that I can learn without embarrassing anybody except my dog, and without frustrating anyone except myself. My hunting buddy Vernon just grins when I tell him the tales of woe on these aborted expeditions. He just can't believe that I'll goof and take the wrong shells, or forget my knife, or leave my hunting license in the car.

It's hard to learn a new sport when you're older, and it's especially hard to take on hunting or fishing. If you're female, you're either learning it because your boyfriend or husband is interested in it, or you're more than a little weird. I'm lucky to have an excuse. Being editor of a wildlife magazine gets you out of a lot of uncomfortable explanations. But, if you're male and want to take up hunting or fishing and you don't have a son for an excuse (I'm taking my boy fishing, you know. Maybe we'll both learn something'), you run the risk of looking like a bimbo the first time you make a cast or throw a gun to your shoulder.

I have this theory that there are a lot of people out there who would like to try their hand at hunting and fishing, but are intimidated by the "macho" mystique surrounding the sport. It's almost like you should already know how to load a gun and hunt deer by the time you're 30, and if you don't, you weren't cut out for it. In fact, I think a lot of men and women who maintain that they dislike hunting and fishing from what they've heard or read or watched on T.V., are merely hiding behind an attitude that protects them from potential humiliation. After all, how many movies have we watched where the mountain man, the great white hunter, and the Indian, have all evoked admiration because of their skill in the hunt? If they mess up, they do it when they're *young*, not when they are seasoned hunters. There's no precedent for the neophyte 40-year-old hunter in the field. It calls for a whole lot of vulnerability and humility, and most of us aren't willing to risk our fragile egos on that. Instead, we'll try racquetball, golf, jogging or tennis.

That's why I love the idea of the mandatory hunter education that we'll be starting here in the next year. First of all, the kids learn the right and safe way to hunt early. That means that when they grow up, they won't try the patience of some kind soul learning how to do something that requires practice and skill.

On the other hand, mandatory education may lure some of us out of the closet and into the field. It may help out those adults who may want to try hunting, but hesitate to put their self-esteem or *in-life*. It gives them an excuse to get introduced to the sport in a controlled situation where *everyone* is a beginner.

Of course, there will always be embarrassment, even for the best. But the trick is to suffer indignities of memory loss or missed shots or snarled line in private.

Unfortunately, it's hard to hide a 17-foot canoe rocking side to side on top of a white *Isuzu Trooper*. Sunglasses and camouflage may help.

Virginia Seplund

May Issue

Volume 48, Number 5

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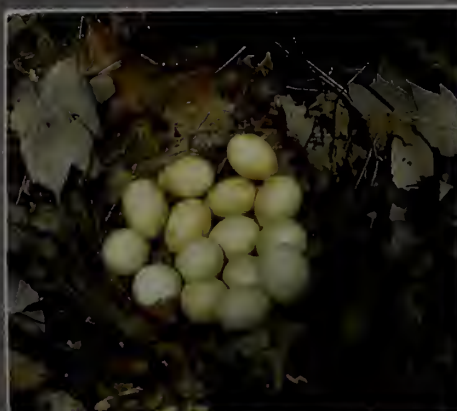
Color separations and printing by Donihe Graphics, Kingsport, Tennessee

Virginia Wildlife (ISSN 0042-6792) is published monthly by the Education Division of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104. Second class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.

Subscription department: 804-257-1000. Rates: one year, \$7.50; three years, \$18.00; back issues \$1.00 each subject to availability.

Submission guidelines available upon request. The Commission accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork. Permission to reprint material from *Virginia Wildlife* must be obtained from the writer, artist or photographer as well as the managing editor.

Observations, conclusions and opinions expressed in *Virginia Wildlife* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the members or staff of the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.



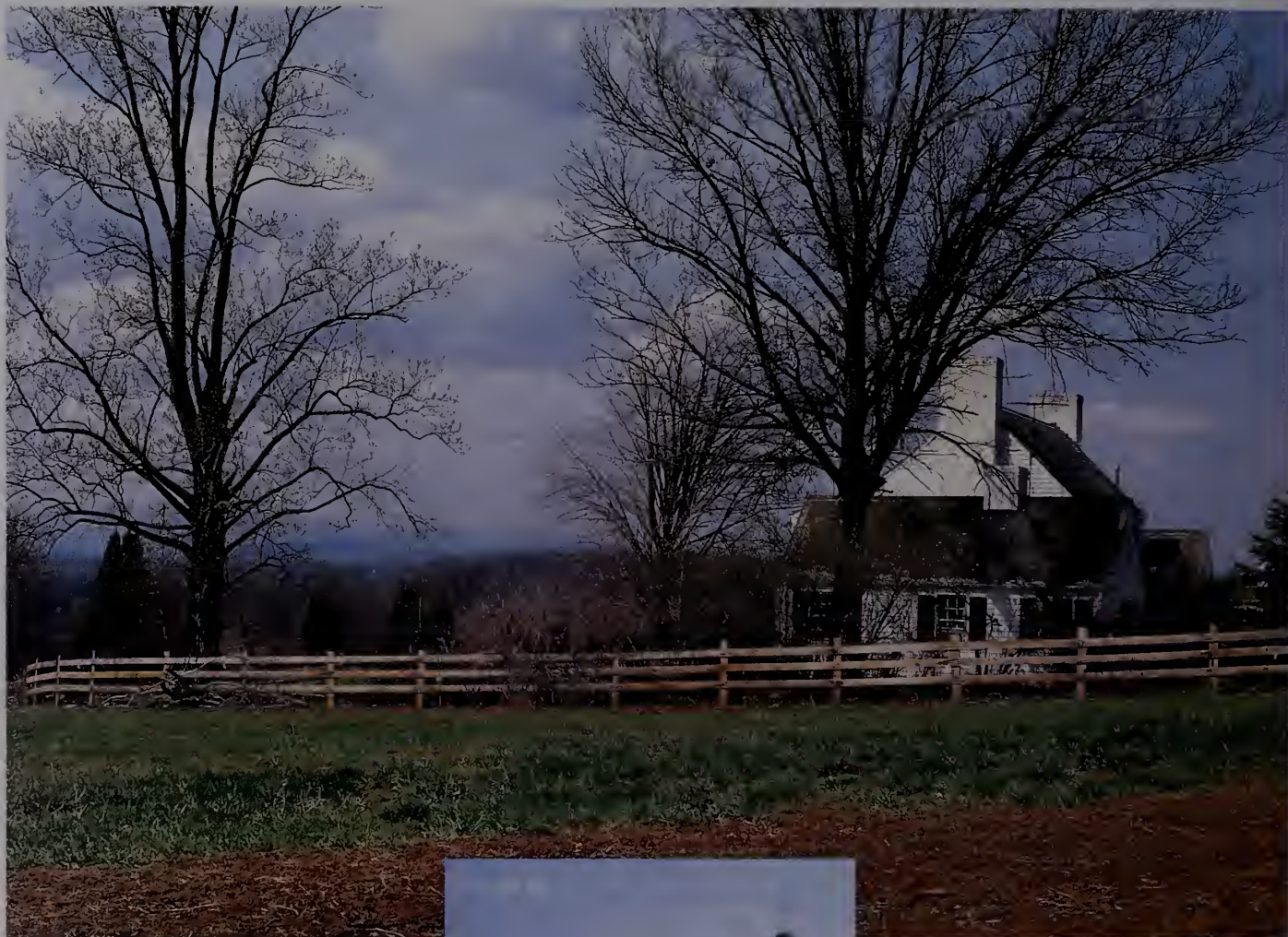
Birds keep their nests and eggs as well-hidden as possible from predators and bird watchers. We hardly ever see them. Beginning on page 16, Jerry Via explains some of these most intimate secrets of birds. Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) nest and eggs; photo by Michael P. Gadomski.

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Saving the Farm From a Sellout



Conservation easements are one way of making sure the land you live on won't be developed. In Orange County, the Speiden family have placed a conservation easement on their farm pictured above, as a guarantee that their land will never become a shopping mall or subdivision; photos by Cindie Brunner.

When my grandfather died, my father bought the homeplace in Radford and stayed for several years trying to eke out a living for his six-member family from a mountainous land and 18 dairy cows that had to be milked by hand twice a day.

When I was 12, he gave up. He sold the farm and moved his family to Richmond where he became the farm foreman for someone else. I still remember riding down the hollow for the last time looking back at the barns as I hung onto the running board of the pickup truck. My daddy and I cried together that day.

I've been back since then and taken my own sons to see the farm where I grew up. I explained as best I could how it felt to gather bales of hay from the fields and stomp alfalfa in the silo with bare feet. I showed them the creek, that used to chill the crocks of milk and sauerkraut in the springhouse, while also being a home for crawdads that swam backwards to hide when someone came to fetch water. But, it isn't the same unless you live it. A bond is formed with the land while standing on a fishing bank as mud seeps up through bare toes. It becomes a part of you.

Thus, there is a sadness that comes with selling the family farm or land that has been handed down from generation to generation. It's like parting with an old friend. And, more and more frequently, farm land is being sold for commercial purposes. However, today's farmer has more choices than my father had. It is no longer always necessary to sell land because of rising taxes, reduced farm income, or because family members opt to become city dwellers.

There are ways a landowner can preserve the natural beauty of the land while still gaining financially. And, in some circumstances, the farmland can still be productively used for agricultural purposes while being preserved as a natural habitat for wildlife.

After recognizing the need to preserve open space within a state that was becoming increasingly more urban, the 1966 General Assembly created the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)

by Nancy Wright Beasley

There are economical alternatives to selling the family farm, the inherited land, or the unproductive farm to pay the rising land taxes. There are ways to save the land that won't send you to the poorhouse.

to assist landowners in their efforts to protect private property and preserve open space. The foundation was established to contract open space easements and accept gifts of land, money and securities for open space preservation.

Tyson Van Auken is the Executive Director of VOF. He describes open space easements as a way for land to remain privately owned and protected.

"If you really care about the family farm, you can fix it so that it won't ever be destroyed and you can still sell it," Van Auken said. "You may not gain as much as if you sold it for development, but the peace of mind that comes with knowing that you have preserved a farm or wildlife habitat forever is more important to a lot of people than quick profit."

An easement is given by the landowner for the purpose of preserving open space which may be marshland, agricultural land, woodland, or a scenic area. A flexible document, an easement may be written to protect varied types of land, depending on the desire of the owner.

If property is undeveloped or in agricultural use, it meets the broad

qualifications of "open space." More specifically, land in urban or rural areas that is scenic, forested, adjacent to an existing or proposed park, or near a scenic road, river, marsh, steep slope, or floodplain qualifies as open space and would be considered for protection.

There are several financial benefits that occur when an easement is donated. For example, a landowner's assessment for real estate tax purposes is based on the fair market value of his land, measured by the potential sale price of his land for its highest and best use. Its potential for commercial, industrial, or high density residential development can be an important component of its assessed value.

If an open space easement is placed on a property, its potential for development is removed and Virginia law requires that this must be recognized in assessing property for real estate tax purposes. Real estate taxes are often stabilized or might be significantly reduced by an open space easement in urbanizing areas.

The gift of a qualified open space easement in perpetuity to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation is also a "charitable" deduction for federal and state income tax purposes. The value of the gift is measured by the decrease in the estimated fair market value of the land, based on an appraisal that determines the value of the land before and after the easement donation. The difference in the two appraisals is the value of the easement and that amount may be deducted from state and federal income taxes. The deduction is limited to 30 percent of the donor's adjusted gross income in any one year. Deductions in excess of 30 percent can be carried forward to the next year for up to five years.

Under certain circumstances, an alternative method is available by which the deduction may equal 50 percent of adjusted gross income. The Foundation will assist the landowner in determining the possibility of this method being used to compute his charitable deduction.

There are still other tax benefits involved. Open space easements result in a reduction in federal estate taxes



and Virginia inheritance taxes. When the land passes to heirs, it cannot be assessed on the basis of its having development potential. Consequently, the heirs may retain property they otherwise may have been forced to sell to pay estate taxes.

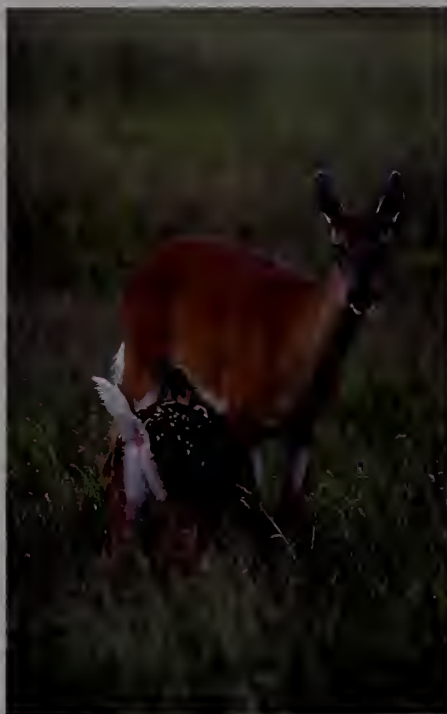
Once Van Auken is contacted by a landowner interested in establishing a conservation easement, he makes an inspection and assessment of the land.

"We look to see if the land fits into any conservation plans or fulfills a public policy. Virginia has a clearly stated farmland preservation policy and that helps to justify easement protection for prime agricultural land.

"Other things considered are natural value (wildlife habitat), historical or scenic value, whether it protects water quality, especially if public water is involved. All are examined to see how a property fits into a preservation scheme," he said.

A landowner agrees to abide by restrictions on the land which vary according to each easement. There are always restrictions that prohibit the accumulation of refuse on the property

Rabbits and white-tailed deer are two of the species that benefit from open space preservation. Eastern cottontail by Jack R. Colbert; White-tailed deer by Mark Wallner.



or the erection of billboards or large signs. Subdivision of the property is prohibited and sound forestry practices are subject to approval of the foundation. Structural buildings are limited to farm or family use. Industrial or commercial activities except farming, silviculture, or horticulture are limited.

Once negotiated restrictions on the property are reached with the landowner and Van Auken, the agreement is presented to the Board of Trustees for VOF. Subsequently, a land easement is drafted.

An easement is signed and recorded like other deeds. Since an easement runs with the title to the property, future owners are also bound by its terms. Therefore, the foundation must be notified in writing 30 days in advance prior to sale of any easement property. Plus, the foundation reserves the right to inspect the property yearly with a full-scale assessment every three years.

A landowner who gives an easement on a parcel of land is assured that his land will remain as he has known it and will be protected from the pressure of urbanization. In addition, the owner can continue with the traditional use of his land and submit it to new uses not prohibited by the easement.

An open space easement arrangement has been made by the foundation with Lawrence W. Latane, Jr., descendant of Augustine Washington, Jr., half brother of George Washington.

Latane, who is 72 and his wife, Maude, learned of open space easements as supported by the foundation through a Fredericksburg newspaper.

The Latanes own approximately 700 acres of land in Westmoreland County and live about two miles from George Washington's birthplace.

Known as Blenheim Farm, the historic value of the homeplace where the Latanes now live cannot be overstated. It was built in 1781 by Augustine Washington, a relative of George Washington and a Brigadier General of the Calvary in the Revolutionary War. Approximately 4,000 acres of land are still owned by Washington descendants in the county according to Latane, who has done his part in seeing that a major historical site will always be

preserved.

The four parcels of land totalling 260 acres that the Latanes have placed in open space easement also met the criteria in other ways. It was a working farm where corn, wheat, barley, soybeans and rye were being harvested as well as beef cattle being produced. In addition, of significant importance was the fact that bald eagles had been sighted nesting near the marsh's edge on the Potomac riverbank. The eagles' nesting sites are specifically protected in the easement arrangement. The trees where the adult eagles have chosen to rear their young cannot be cut down for at least two years from the time of the last sighting of nesting activity. Other timber on the land is also managed in conjunction with forestry preservation techniques.

The Latanes have a son, Lawrence III, and a daughter, Rebecca. Their son recently moved his family back to the farm and is living just down the road from his parents. This has special significance to the young Latane. As an adult, he can now rehook the same fields and revisit the same ponds where he hooked his first fish as a youth and built homes for the wood ducks to nest in.

Another farmer and environmentalist turned to VOF after being unsuccessful in trying to have an agricultural district established where he lives.

William H. Speiden is a modern-day dairy farmer in Orange County with a milking herd of 200 Holstein cows. Like Latane, he has a great respect for the land and didn't want to see his homeplace some day developed into condominiums or shopping centers. He was also very concerned about the possibility of uranium mining in the county. To date, the Speidens have placed 183.5 acres of land in open space easement and plan to eventually place their entire land holdings with VOF.

Although the farm is of major economic importance to the Speidens—it supports eight families beside their own—it also has significant archaeological potential. Prehistoric occupational debris has been located at 46 known sites in the Hampstead Farm Archaeological District which is located



The bobwhite quail (Colinus virginianus) in Virginia needs all the help it can get. Preserving open space with a conservation easement is one step towards restoring the bird's numbers in Virginia; photo by Nell Bolen.

along the south side of the Rapidan River west of Old Somerset within the county.

As Bill Speiden bumped down part of the Old Mountain Road in a mud-spattered truck to check on one of his cows that he was hoping would give birth before midnight, he adjusted his cowboy hat, spat tobacco juice out the window of the truck and said, "This land was here a long time before I got here. I'm only here for a short while. I want to leave it in better shape, or in a more productive state than I found it."

The Latanes and the Speidens have joined growing numbers of landowners who have decided to take permanent action to protect their farmland from the growing encroachment of industry

and commercialization. Since 1974, 35,000 acres of land in the state have been protected by VOF.

As Latane said, "When I walk through the woods early in the morning through open space easement land, and a flock of turkeys fly out of the trees above my head, then it makes me feel good to know that the environment will always stay the same."

Landowners interested in land conservation easements can contact the foundation by calling Tyson Van Auken at 804/786-5539 or writing the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, 221 Governor Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. □

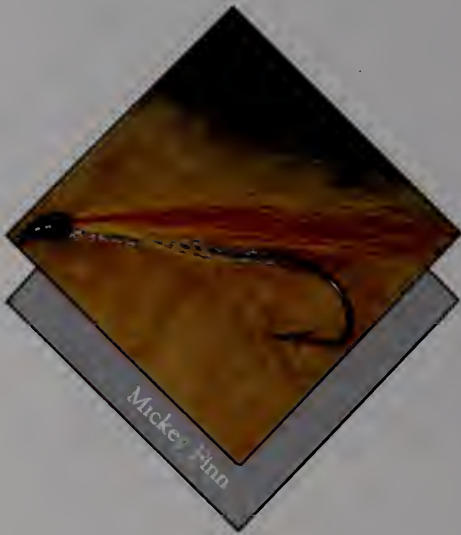
Nancy Wright Beasley is a freelance writer living in South Hill.

Casting the Classics

Remember the Henryville
Special, the Mickey
Finn, and the Cowdung?
They can still hold their
own on a trout stream.

by Allen G. Eastby
photos by Roy Edwards

It was one of those days all anglers have, at least once in awhile. Nothing I did was right. Every fly I clinch-knotted onto the end of my leader was ignored by the trout. None of the tricks and tactics I tried seemed to work. The fish were bound and determined to prove I was not as good a flyrodder as I liked to tell myself I was. I knew, in my toes, that this was going to go down as one of the worst days of the decade. Finally, disgusted with the trout (and myself), I scrambled out of the stream and began the long, slow walk back to the car. Once the fly rod was broken down and safely tucked away in the back of the station wagon, I took my lunch bag, found a nice streamside rock, and settled in with a





ham-and-cheese and the May sunshine.

I was just finishing the last mouthful of sandwich when a pair of anglers came into view working their way downstream. They were taking turns, one fishing a pool, pocket, or glide while the other gave laugh-punctuated advice. They didn't see me at first, so I sat and watched them, and almost laughed out loud. One of them was using a cast of three old-style wet flies; bright, gaudy patterns that might work in northern Canada but were useless here, within casting distance of thousands of first rate anglers. The trout were too smart, too sophisticated, to fall for red, white, and blue *wet flies*. The second flyrodder was working a Mickey Finn bucktail. A *Mickey Finn*. No one had used a Mickey Finn in 25 years. And today's flyfishers know that streamers and bucktails are best when fished upstream, never downstream. It was a hard struggle to keep my laughter to myself. But my mirth turned to anger and my laughter to silent curses as I watched them catch first one trout, then another and then a third and a fourth.

Then, just to make it worse, they caught sight of me, waved hello, and asked how I was doing. I lied and said just fine.

I didn't record the incident in my fishing diary, but it lodged in my mind and stayed there, never very far from the surface, for several weeks. No matter what I did, no matter how successful I was with my emergers and no-hackle dry flies, with my hair-wing caddis and woven-bodied nymphs, I couldn't stop thinking about those two yahoos who had outfished me using flies and techniques that were old hat—outmoded, obsolete, out-of-date—in my father's time.

As I continued to mull over the incident, I came to the realization that there is something to be said for getting back to basics, for using the old, tried, and proven tactics, techniques, and flies that our grandfathers found so effective. But like most flyrodders (and anglers in general), I had been caught up in a blind whirl of fashionable crazes. If the fly pattern or tactic wasn't "new" or "innovative," it just couldn't work. Yet I had seen two fishermen



catch trout after trout with ancient flies fished in archaic ways. Could it be, I asked myself, that there were times and places when a good old Parma Belle or a faithful Cowdung, fished wet, was a better choice than a "wiggle nymph" or a "wooly booger?" Was it possible a Mickey Finn could take trout when a Matuka Muddler failed? Could it be that our grandfathers weren't as foolish as we sometimes like to think?

The two anglers I had watched on that May morning were no longer yahoos.

Just to see if the old ways would indeed work on today's trout, I tied up a half dozen Henryville Specials and fished them the way country old-timers had taught a city boy to fish them 25 years ago: skipped and skittered over the surface. I caught trout, and had a great deal of fun recapturing lost youth, if only for an afternoon. The Henryvilles weren't as effective as I hoped they would be when I showed them to rising trout later in the week. Those fish wanted a Light Cahill and nothing but a Light Cahill and they wanted the fly presented dead drift and drag free. But I have been using Henryvilles regularly since then, and breaking the sanctified rules of flyfishing by making them skate and flutter over the surface, just the way I was taught years ago. They've saved me from a number of fishless days.

In addition to the Henryville Special, I've "rediscovered" the other dry fly my childhood mentors swore by: the Fanwing Royal Coachman. It does seem out-of-place in the fly box of an angler who used a "hi-tech" fly rod made of "space-age" materials, and it imitates nothing in nature, but it is, without a doubt, the best dry fly ever cast over a brook trout.

The Fanwing Royal is a fly that lends itself to fishing small, rocky, heavily shaded streams. It's easy to see, and it stays afloat. But it, like the Henryville, is at its best when it is manipulated. Over the past 10 years, a great deal has been written about imparting movement to dry flies. Much of it has centered on ways to mimic the antics of emerging caddisflies and the tricks and techniques that have been developed are solid and reliable. For caddis imita-

tions, that is, but not for Fanwings. The best way to "work" one of these flies is to cast it upstream, let it settle and drift with the current, and then give the line a twitch, a very gentle twitch, so the fly quivers. It takes patience and practice to master the knack of getting the fly to move just so. It's worth the effort. When faced with fast water, all that is necessary is to put the fly where the trout can see it. If they are in the least inclined, they'll pounce on it.

It's not only traditional dry flies that work. I've also found that old fashioned wet flies do the job. Not always or everywhere (but, no fly ever tied works always and everywhere), but patterns like the Cowdung, Dark Cahill, and Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear can turn days of frustration into days to remember.

It isn't easy, however, to fish "casts" of wet flies. Somehow, today's leaders (even if they are computer designed) just don't perform when you try to attach three flies to them. It really doesn't matter, though, because wet flies can be effectively fished one at a time. They are also best when fished downstream and manipulated so they dart and weave in the current.

Certainly, this is a far cry from today's "matching the hatch" mania or the current doctrine that subsurface flies must imitate drifting nymphs. But for some reason known only to the trout, they like wet flies that resemble nothing they ever saw before, and the fish like them moving. Often, they like them moving rapidly.

It's best, then, to do what nineteenth century anglers did. Cast the wet fly (or flies, if you can make up multi-fly "casts") downstream. Allow the fly to sink. Then retrieve it, varying the speed of the retrieve until you find the right one. You'll know it's the right retrieve speed when a trout ambushes the fly.

Then, too, the Mickey Finn, and other venerable bucktails and streamers can do the job. They may even be better than the highly touted "new patterns" that appear every year. But they, like wet flies, are best when fished as their inventors fished them: downstream. It is heresy against current dogma, which calls for presenting



streamers or bucktails that are accurate and realistic baitfish imitations across or upstream, but flashy attractors can (not always will, just can) drive trout into a frenzy, if they scurry and scamper through the stream. Any thoroughly modern flyrodder will tell you it's not supposed to happen that way. Trout are too selective, too cagey, too wise-in-the-ways-of-anglers to fall for such a tactic or such flies. Try it for yourself and see. Only give it a fair trial. Don't knot on a bright bucktail, make two casts, and then a swear at the yahoo who suggested it. Try a Mickey Finn the next four or five times the trout are humiliating you. If it helps you turn even one day around, it will have been well worth it.

It is also very easy to make a convincing argument for using the classic bass flies. You don't see them in flyfishing catalogs very often these days, and the tactics used to present them to large-mouth haven't changed much over the years, but there are days when a big White Miller or Bumble Bee wet fly will do wonders. They're not going to be featured on the cover of a magazine, but they do take bass, and that's what counts.

In the middle of my search through the past for flies and tactics I could use today, I remembered a tale one of my grandmothers told, of trout fishing in Norway. The boys and young men of the village, Grandma Krogstad would say, always caught trout. For bait, they used trout fins. Now, according to some authorities on the history of flyfishing, the Parma Belle (sometimes called the Paramachene Belle) wet fly was intended as an imitation of the fin of brook trout, which native Americans told early angling explorers of the Canadian North was the best bait to use for trout. It could well be that both tales are tall, very tall. Grandma Krogstad could tell some good ones. But suppose they're true. Could the Algonquins have been right? What if we had flies that looked like the fins of brown and rainbow trout? It could be our fishing forebearers have still more to teach us. □

Allen G. Eastby is a freelance writer living in New Jersey who has recently published the novel, The Tenth Men.

The year is 1931. Route 13, a sand and tar road, meanders its way through the Powhatan countryside. Horse and mule plod along in the red dust of the new Ford Model A and the older Model T. W.B. Batterson is recently married and 27 years old. His new business, a commercial garage, and his new wooden house sit side-by-side on the edge of this quiet, rural road.

Today, 83-year-old Batterson is a widower after 52 years of marriage. His section of Route 13 is now a paved, four-lane divided highway known as Route 60. His garage is gone, replaced by a restaurant and store. The roar of tractor-trailer trucks can be heard inside his modest brick home, even though it sits well back from the road's edge. His first home, the one on the edge of the road, was swallowed by the expanding highway long ago.

Batterson turns his head so that his "good ear" faces a visitor. Too many years of rifle and shotgun blasts robbed his unprotected hearing. "Everything has changed over the years," says Batterson. "It's all been gradual. Ain't none of it been overnight." That includes the county's hunting.

Batterson started hunting in the Dorset area of Powhatan "around 1918 . . . as soon as I was big enough to handle a shotgun." Back then, says Batterson, "deer were a rarity. There were plenty of turkeys. Rabbits . . . we had 'em in droves. You didn't have to have a dog to hunt rabbits in those days. Anywhere up and down the railroad you could just go out there and kick up rabbits all day long!"

When Karl Reidelbach, a Chesterfield County resident, started hunting in Powhatan, he drove to hunts in a convertible Ford Model A that had a rumble seat. A rumble seat? "Oh yeah!" he laughs. "That was back in my courtin' days and it was the only thing I had to drive."

Quick with a smile, Reidelbach grins as he relates his first hunting experience as a small boy. He shot a large gobbler on his family's Powhatan farm, but only wounded it. Afraid his quarry would get away, he rushed to the flapping bird and threw his arms around it. "It almost beat me to death before it

dropped." Since then, Reidelbach has shot 96 turkeys. His goal is 100.

Like Batterson, the 73-year-old Reidelbach has seen changes in Powhatan's hunting. Years ago, Reidelbach says he "kept bird dogs all the time. Back then, 12 birds was the limit. But you could see six or seven coveys a day. We used to figure there was a covey of birds every 25-30 acres of abandoned or working farmland. Now, on a modern farm, if you find a covey every 100 acres, you're lucky . . . they're just not here."

While the birds and rabbits were plentiful in the Depression years, deer were not. When Reidelbach bagged an 8-point buck in 1935, he and a dozen of his buddies loaded up the buck and took it down to Richmond to get their picture taken for the newspaper. The picture, according to Reidelbach, ap-

peared on the front page.

Deer were a valuable commodity in Powhatan's Depression years. Batterson remembers that, "every now and then during the hunting season, someone would bring in a deer, put it on the train and ship it to Richmond. When they killed a deer in those days, they most likely sold it 'cause they got a good price for it, and money was scarce."

In the late 20s, Floyd Yates moved to Powhatan to start a Ford dealership. "There were no deer to speak of when I came here," he says. "Now I can go out there, sit down and count 25 or 30."

Yates spent 1940-52 as a member of the General Assembly, and in 1966 was appointed to a six-year term as a Commissioner of the appointed board of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

A Sporting History:

Powhatan County

by Tim Wright

Powhatan County has changed a lot in the past 50 years. A four-lane highway called Rte. 60 is just the beginning; photo by Tim Wright.



"When I started hunting in Powhatan," says the 84-year-old Yates, "there were plenty of turkeys for the few hunters we had. Then we went through periods of practically no turkeys.

"While I was in the General Assembly, they tried to get a bill through to kill bearded turkeys only. And I fought it. I fought it like nobody's business."

"Next hunting season," continues Yates, "after I fought that bill, the state game department prevailed upon me to go with them to Alabama where they had no turkeys and then brought 'em back. We spent a week down there studying turkey harvesting."

The experience changed Yates and he found himself supporting the same bill he had fought earlier on the floor of the House of Delegates. "We came back and tried to sell the idea (of a

spring gobbler season) here. And we had a hard time."

Yates was so sold on the spring gobbler season in Alabama, however, that he used his political clout to advance the idea in Virginia county by county. Powhatan became the first to approve the new season and served as a model for the rest of the state.

Pausing, Yates leans back in his favorite chair and begins chuckling over an incident long ago. With a wave of his arm, he begins another story from his political turkey days.

When confronted by resistance to the new gobbler season, Yates wasn't above a little arm twisting. One uncooperating board of supervisors that had voted against the spring season had a weak spot. The board wanted to see a lake constructed in its county. Yates let

it be known that if the board refused his spring gobbler season, that he would do his best to block their plans for a lake. The board quickly reversed the earlier vote.

As his laughter dies, Yates leans forward in his seat, suddenly serious. Shaking a weathered finger for emphasis, he begins. "The turkeys came back because we didn't kill any hens. It's the same reason we brought the deer back. We almost wiped out good hunting. Good game management and enforcement has brought it back."

Shortly before World War II, there was a new organization in Virginia called the National Wild Turkey Federation. The organization worked with the Game Commission in the relocation of turkeys taken from George Washington and Jefferson National



"Everything has changed over the years. It's all been gradual. Ain't none of it been overnight."—83-year-old W.B. Batterson; photo by Tim Wright.

Willey Overstreet's new litter of deer dogs; photo by Lynda Richardson.



Forests. The idea was to take surplus birds and use them to reestablish populations elsewhere in the state.

The surplus turkeys were netted by the Commission and placed in boxes donated by paper companies. The boxes, with turkey heads poking out, were quickly loaded into airplanes for the relocations.

Karl Reidelbach, a member of the Federation, remembers flying over parts of the state in a plane loaded with gobblers and hens. When they flew over large farms, where farmers had agreed not to hunt turkeys for five years, they grabbed three hens and a gobbler and threw them out the door. "Did you know," Reidelbach said as he leaned on the door of a car, "that where those farmers didn't hunt those birds, that some places had 300 turkeys after those five years?"

Willey Overstreet, a youngster at 62, sits on the weather-beaten front porch of his isolated home. Eight deer dog pups play in his lap and chew on his shoelaces. Stroking a pup at his side, he reminisces about changes that have soured him. "Today people don't take care of your property. So, now you got all this posted land."

The phrase "posted" is often mentioned and usually with a sense of disdain. It's the kind of word that nobody likes, but everybody understands.

"Land was never posted," says Frank Reese who started hunting in Powhatan County in 1944. "After the war (WWII), things got worse and worse as far as posted land goes. Today you have a lot of drinkin' with hunting. People back then didn't drink . . . they were better hunters. It's too much of a party now."

"Slob hunters." It's the term that Reidelbach uses for those hunters that leave beer cans, tear down fences with their four wheel drives, shoot up structures, hunt over bait, kill livestock or just shoot indiscriminately. It's the "slob hunters" that have led so many to post their land.

"Those are the people that give us the trouble and the blackeye about 'sportsmen' because they aren't sportsmen," claims Yates. "But the clubs know if they violate the rules . . ."

"I think the hunt clubs have helped a



"We used to figure there was a covey of birds every 25-30 acres of abandoned or working farmland. Now, on a modern farm, if you find a covey every 100 acres, you're lucky. . . they're just not there."—73-year-old Karl Reidelbach; photo by Tim Wright.

"When I started hunting in Powhatan, there were plenty of turkeys for the few hunters we had. Then we went through periods of practically no turkeys."—84-year-old Floyd Yates; photo by Tim Wright.



lot and some have hurt a lot," says Reese. As there are good and bad hunters, "there are good clubs and bad clubs," states Reidelbach.

However, Yates believes that "without the hunt clubs, we would have nothing. I've got people who would tell you 'no hunting on my place!' We would ask why, and they would say, 'they (the hunters) leave messes. They leave this, they leave that.'"

"The Mennonites, the finest people you ever knew, they used to rent their land for a dollar a day for you to come out there and shoot doves after harvesting." As he continues, the disgust in his voice grows. "And they always had trouble. Junk around. Mess around . . ." Relaxing, Yates finishes by adding, "And then they started renting it to the clubs. They laid down the rules to the clubs. And no more trouble."

Partly because of the "slob hunters," hunt clubs have grown in size and number to become a dominate force in Powhatan's hunting. Any large tracts of land that were once open to any and all are now posted. These large posted tracts are often leased to a hunt club.

The clubs, because they are held responsible, take care of the land and see to it that the property is not abused by the members or anyone else. The lease arrangement makes the landowner happy because of added revenue and less damage. The clubs are better off because they get exclusive hunting rights. But that means that solitary hunters are out of luck.

The future of Powhatan's hunting, like that of many other areas, appears mixed. There are more deer and turkey, but fewer birds and rabbits. And raccoon hunting seems to be heading for darker days. "This rabies mess . . . people are stayin' out of it," mused Overstreet, a longtime coon hunter.

Otherwise, he, like others, think Powhatan's hunting "will stay pretty close to what it is right now. I don't see where it will get any worse. All that building in eastern Powhatan is pushing the game this way." □

Tim Wright is a freelance writer and photographer living in Richmond.



Of all the secrets of bird behavior, perhaps none is more intimate than the location of the nest. Birds are typically creatures of high visibility. In the spring, brightly colored males sing from exposed perches, perform showy courtship antics for female audiences, and drive away rival males with feather-pulling combat. During the winter, many birds visit bird feeders, the most public of places, for a welcome handout. But, at nesting time, birds seem to vanish from our midsts.

It is at this time that the female asserts her authority and chooses the location of the nest or selects one of several already made by her mate. Once completed, the nest serves as a cradle for the tiny time capsules of the next generation.

Each bird is an avian architect with a unique, ordained set of blueprints for the design of the nest. Like so many aspects of bird behavior, nest building behavior follows an inherited pattern, but just as with humans, practice makes perfect. Older birds have "the right stuff" as they tend to build the more durable nests in the more secure locations. The result of these different blueprints is that nests come in many shapes and styles, from the simple scrapes in the sand of shorebirds, to the more complex platform nests of the doves, herons, and eagles. The most complex nests of all are the intricate marvels of architecture constructed by songbirds.

Because birds can fly, their choices for nest locations would seem limitless, but each species has its own anatomical handicaps. For example, Acadian flycatchers do not have beaks capable of excavating a tree cavity, and the large wings of bald eagles do not allow them to nest on the forest floor.

For many ground nesters, including most of our woodland game birds, the least conspicuous nest is no nest at all. Pale eggs are laid directly on the leaf litter and are camouflaged by the mottled feather pattern of the incubating female. Female grouse, woodcock and mallards sit tightly on the nest and flush only at the last moment in the face of an intruder. The young of these birds hatch covered with down, eyes

Intimate Secrets

The hidden nests of our birds

by Jerry Via

open and ready for action. They leave the nest soon after hatching and follow their mothers for food.

Other ground nests, such as those of the gulls and terns, are found along the beach in areas where there is little cover and few predators. As a result, there is no attempt to conceal the nest in vegetation. Many gulls and terns also nest in large colonies which allows them to more effectively drive away larger gulls who try to steal the eggs or young.

The ultimate in nesting security is the cavity nest located in an old woodpecker hole or a hollow tree. Initially, cavities are excavated only by the strong bills of industrious woodpeckers. Abandoned cavities attract many other tenants, however, such as nut-hatches, chickadees, bluebirds, and flycatchers. As the wood decays, and the cavities become large, other birds such as screech owls, and barred owls may occupy the cavity.

Cavity nests, however, are in high demand for most of our birds, since most cavity trees are being removed for firewood. There is also a fierce rivalry between our native cavity birds and two European imports, the house sparrow and the European starling, for nice nesting holes. The immigrants tend to evict the rightful owners of the cavity and take the nest for themselves. Such nest piracy is the major reason for the decline of the red-headed woodpecker and the Eastern bluebird. For bluebirds, a major salvation has been the erection of many bluebird boxes in farmland and pastures.

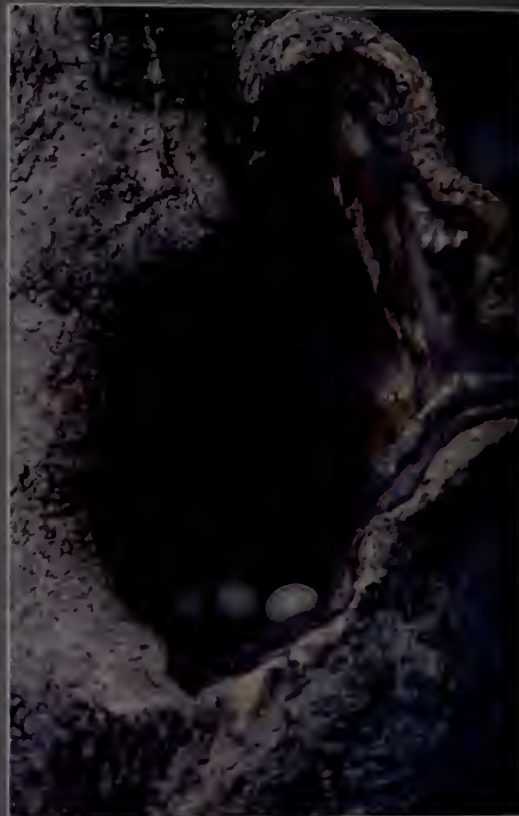
The most intricate nests belong to those birds which nest in trees and bushes. The young of these birds are hatched naked, blind, and helpless and must remain in the nest until they are able to fly. The nests of these birds are carefully constructed to provide warmth and protection from the elements for the eggs and young. Birds may pay less attention to the height from the ground as to the cover over the nest and potential escape routes from the nest.

Each species has its own preferences for building materials and the nests of many birds can be recognized with a little practice, by examining the shape and the materials used. For example, chipping sparrows were once called "hairbirds," because they always use horsehair to line their nests. When horsehair is not available, they may substitute fine grasses, and some modern chipping sparrows may incorporate fishing line to make an everlasting nest. Mallard ducks and waterfowl always line their nests with a soft warm layer of down feathers pulled from the female's breast. Great crested flycatchers, common throughout Virginia, always drape a snake skin from their nests, apparently in an attempt to frighten potential predators. If necessary, a suitably shaped piece of polyethylene plastic discarded along the road will suffice.

The hummingbird's nest is one of the most durable and warmest of all nests. The female carefully gathers spider webs which she weaves into a tiny basket and covers with mosses and lichens. The protected eggs soon hatch,



Female mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) on nest;
photo by Lynda Richardson.



Barred owl (*Strix varia*) eggs; photo by Gregory K. Scott.



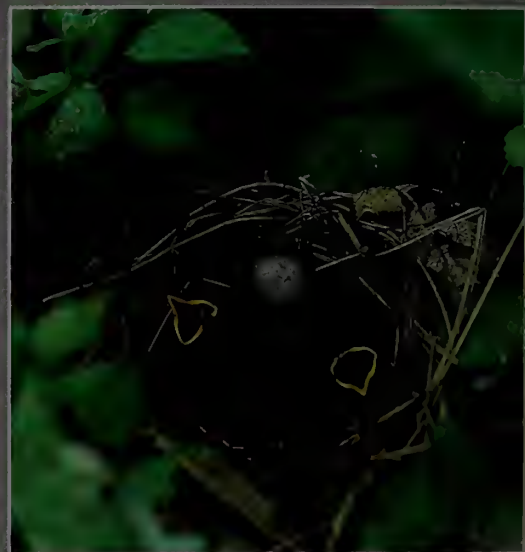
Forster's tern (*Sterna forsteri*) nest on M... Island; photo by Jerry Via.



Yellow-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) nest on Wreck Island; photo by Jerry Via



Acadian flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*) on nest;
photo by R.C. Simpson.



Left: Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) nest and eggs; photo by Michael P. Gadomski. **Top:** Female ruby-throated hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) on nest; photo by William S. Lea. **Bottom:** Rufous-sided towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) nestlings and eggs; photo by William S. Lea.

and as the baby hummingbirds grow, the elastic nest grows with them.

To ensure their survival, each pair of birds, no matter what the species, must carefully construct their nest in the most secure location to incubate the eggs and rear the young. While the young are in the nest, they are learning the characteristics of their habitat. This is a very important process, because when they mature and select their own nest site, they will try to find one similar to the area in which they were raised. This is the reason that each species has such a strong preference for a specific habitat. These preferences are highly predictable and a trained observer knows exactly where to look to find a particular bird's nest. Because this small parcel of property is so important, the parent birds will often sacrifice themselves for its protection, by drawing attention away from the nest with a distraction. The killdeer which often nests in gravel parking lots, feigns injury and cries incessantly as it hobbles away, luring predators and concerned humans with it.

Occasionally, you may come across the nest of a bird, or a young bird which has tumbled out of its nest. There is an old rumor that says if you handle the eggs or a baby bird, the parents will abandon the nest because they can smell your scent. This simply is not true, because birds have an almost non-existent sense of smell. What is much more likely is that your scent may lead a predator to the nest.

Thus, it is still good policy to not handle nests eggs or young unless in an emergency, and some birds (such as cardinals) are sensitive to disruption during early incubation and will abandon the nest if disturbed. However, birds will rarely abandon young unless one of the parents dies. If you find a young bird out of place, put it in a safe location, off the ground and the parent will answer the begging cries with a meal. Learning about the bird world takes only patience. Watch your bird nests from a distance and marvel at the devoted parental care and the rapid growth of their young. □

Jerry Via is an assistant professor of biology at VPI & SU and president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology.



Top: American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) chicks and eggs; photo by Charles Schwartz. **Below left:** Chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) nest and eggs; photo by Gregory K. Scott. **Below right:** Laughing gull chick on nest (*Larus atricilla*); photo by Jerry Via.



Upper New River Float Trips



Flowing northward toward Claytor Lake, the Upper New River winds through Grayson, Carroll, Wythe, and Pulaski counties, through some mighty pretty country—some might say the best in the state. When the fishing is good, and it nearly always is for muskie, smallmouth, bluegill, and channel catfish, life doesn't get much better than a float trip down this stretch of river. □

Below is a description of several canoe trips on the Upper New River, with public access and takeout points highlighted on the map on the following pages. Remember that the New River is one of only two rivers in the state that flows *north*, so make sure you get your upstream and downstream directions straight before you plan your trip. **Caution:** Make sure you check with a topographical map *before* you start a trip. There are several dangerous dams on this stretch of river. **Remember:** Personal flotation devices are required for each person in any boat, including canoes and kayaks. A state fishing license is also required to fish the river.

Mouth of Wilson (Route 93 Bridge) to Bridle Creek (Route 601 Bridge):

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Numerous ledges and exceptional mountain scenery. Portage around power house at Field's Dam on river left. This is muskie country, so take along stiff poles with strong lines. Takeout on river right.

Bridle Creek to Independence:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Good fishing section with beautiful scenery and vistas. Rapids should be scouted before being run. Takeout on river left.

Independence to Baywood (Route 58 Bridge):

Paddle time: 6-8 hours. Numerous ledges and good fishing with mountain scenery. Takeout on river right.

Baywood to Riverside:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Several deep holes with good fishing and scenic mountain views. Takeout on river left.

Riverside to Old Town:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Several deep holes with good fishing. Scenic views on both sides of river. Takeout on river right.

Old Town to Fries:

Paddle time: 6-8 hours. This stretch has historically produced good muskie fishing. Three to four miles of flatwater paddling upriver of the Fries Dam, portage on river left. Takeout on river left below school.

Fries to Ivanhoe:

Paddle time: 8-10 hours. Long float trip requiring portages at both Byllesby and Buck Dams. Portages on river left. Flatwater paddling required for at least two miles upriver of each dam. Beautiful mountain scenery through gorge. Takeout on river left at usable, but unimproved boat landing site.

Ivanhoe to Allisonia:

Paddle time: 2-3 days. Class II-III rapids and ledges at Foster Falls down river from Jackson Ferry (Route 52) Bridge. Continued area of muskie fishing and mountain scenery. Takeout on river right just as you're entering the backwater of Claytor Lake.

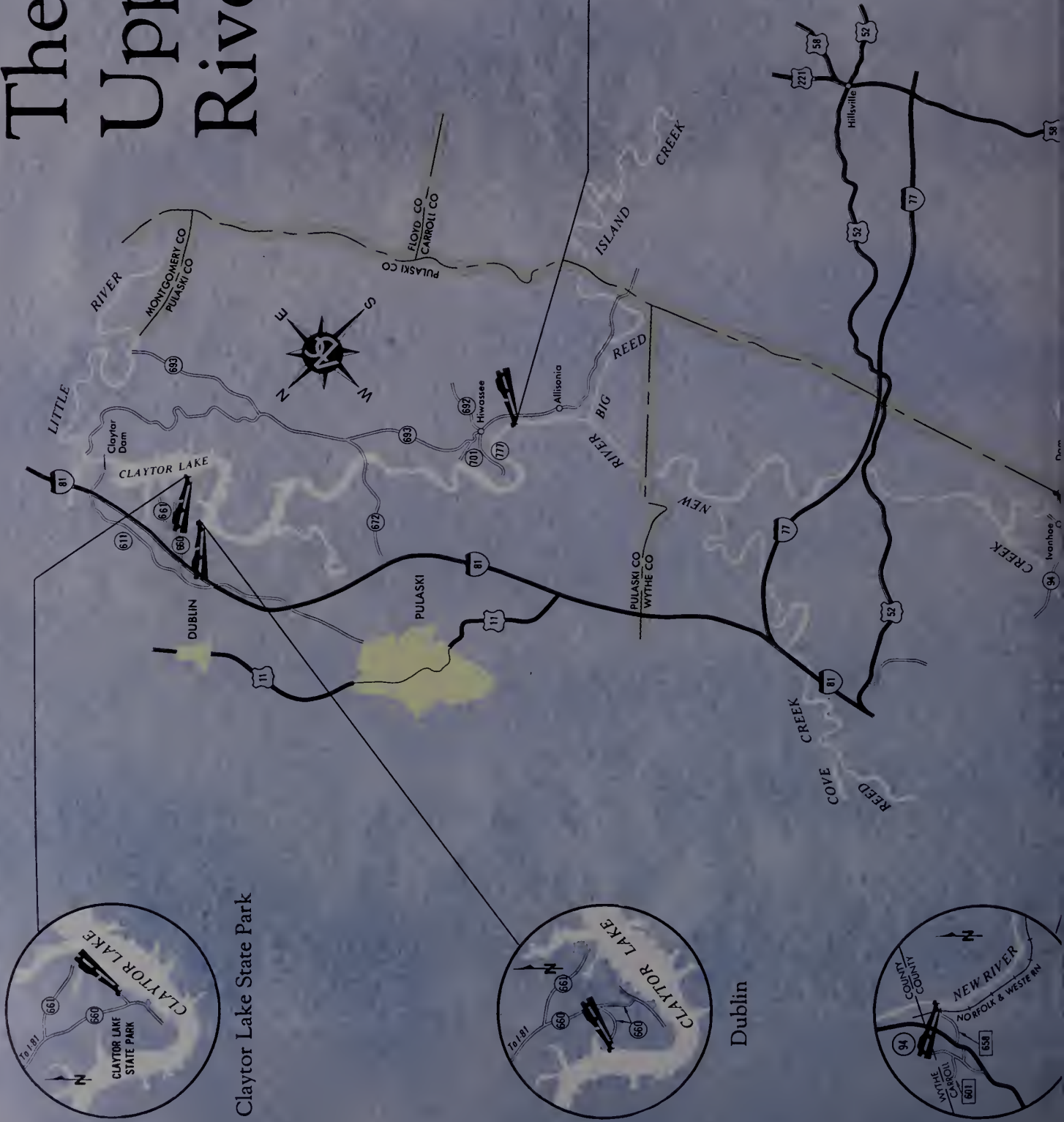
Dublin Boat Ramp:

Access area for trailered boats to Claytor Lake.

Claytor Lake State Park Boat Ramp:

Access area inside of Claytor Lake State Park for trailered boats.

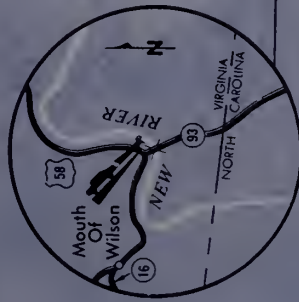
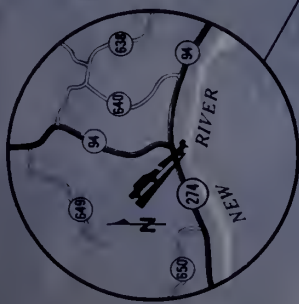
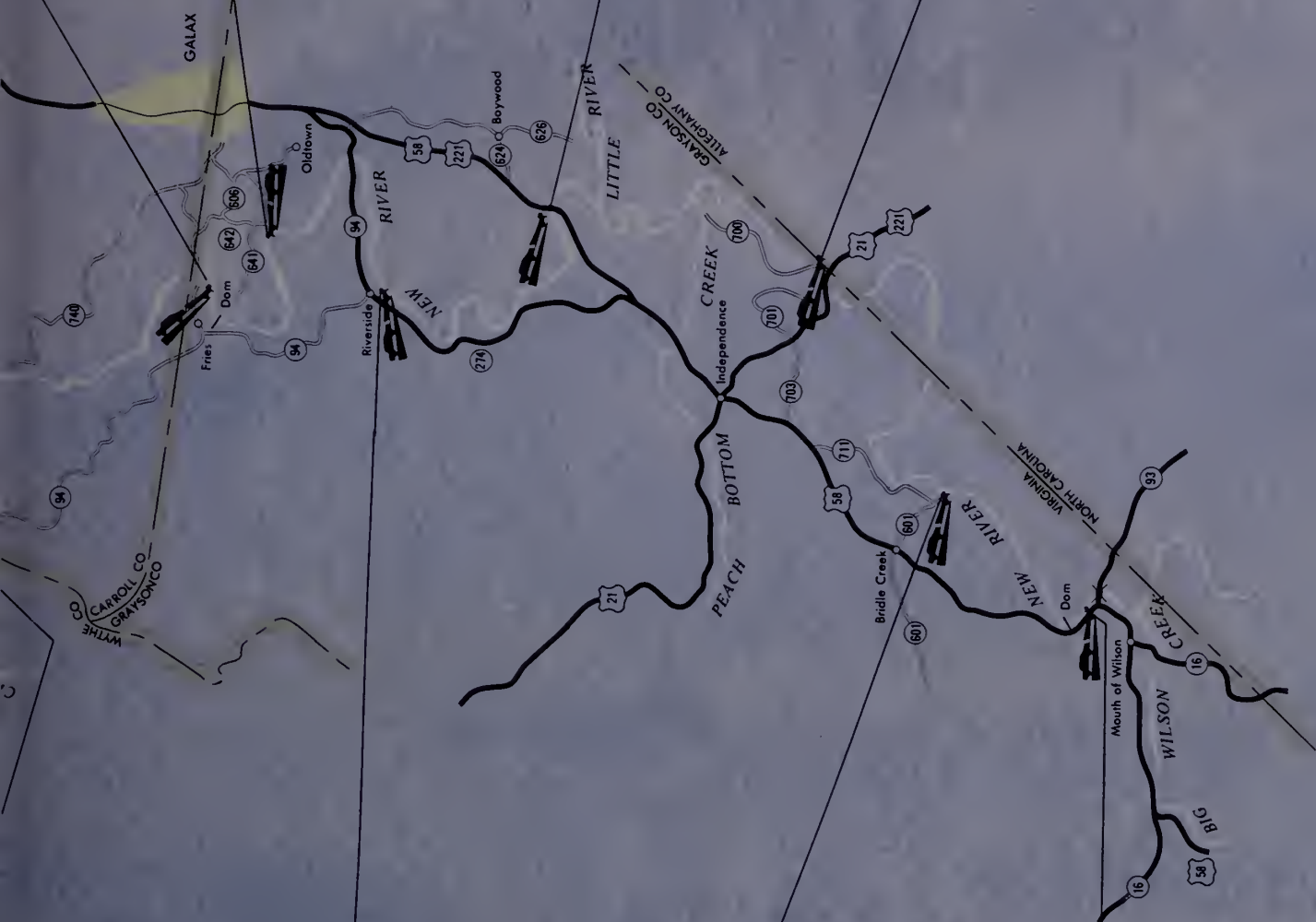
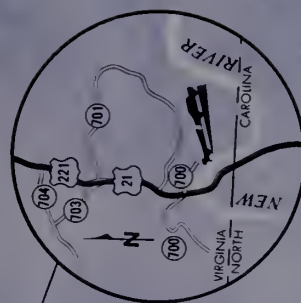
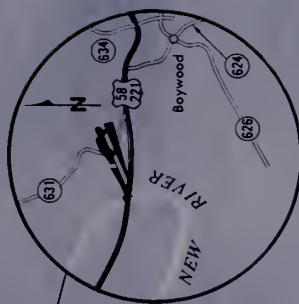
The Upper New River



Claytor Lake State Park

Dublin

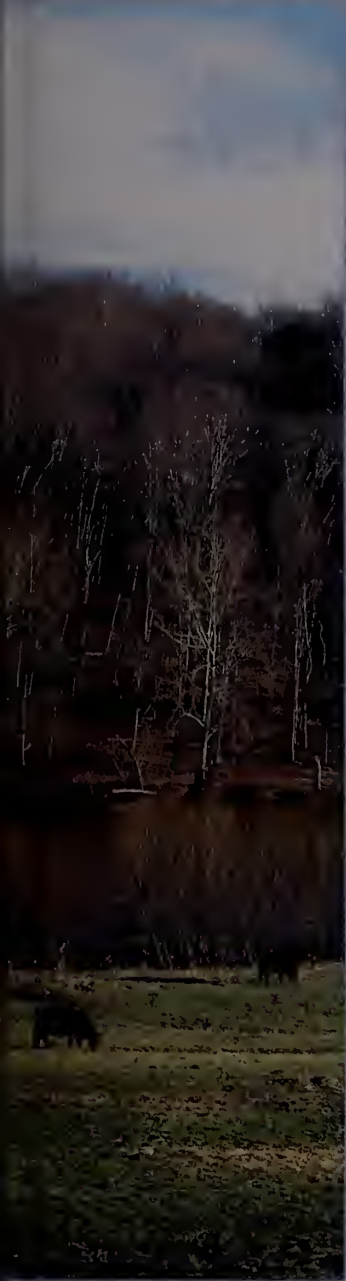
Allisonia





The New River, as it winds past a farm in Grayson County.

Floating the New River



The New River just below a dam near Fries in Grayson County.

photos by Lynda Richardson

The New River, winding its way through Grayson County.



After the Silver Rush

White bass are still catchable after the "silver rush" of their spring spawning runs. You just have to know how to go about fishing for them.

by Bruce Ingram

illustrations by Spike Knuth

During the spring, it is often a spectacular sight in many parts of the Old Dominion. White bass, consumed with the ancient urge to reproduce, race up the state's rivers out of Virginia's large lakes and reservoirs to spawn. In their wake, thousands of anglers cast into the hurly burly for some of the most frenzied fishing of the year. People stand arm to arm along riverbanks as if they were panning for gold in the California of 1849. The action seems like it will last forever, the white hit nearly every kind of lure, and 25 fish stringers are common.

And then it is over. Within a month, the white bass, known variously as sand or silver bass, sandies, silvers, or just plain whites, "disappear" and most sportsmen turn to bass, crappie, and bluegills. Steve Greer of Newbern however, doesn't forsake sandies after the spawn. In fact, he waits for the "silver rush" of the early spring to cease and then begins serious prospecting for this species.

"I just wanted a challenge," explains Greer. "People give up on silvers after the spring spawning runs. And few fishermen have taken the time to learn their habits.

"For example, everyone who fishes for largemouths knows that a bass will hang out around a tree lap or a boat dock. But whites are schoolers and they may or may not relate to an object. When people catch a white bass—outside of the spawn—it's usually a mistake. And when they catch a big white bass, it's almost always an accident. By learning about the habits of this fish, you can pattern them just like you can other species."

The part-time guide on Claytor Lake does not land sandies by chance. Greer has boated over 90 white bass in the past four years that went over the citation size of two pounds, including a personal best of three pounds, six ounces.

"From mid-May to early June you can usually find white bass near points, boat docks, and underwater brush," Greer says. "That's what is so weird. People will be fishing where the white bass are, but they won't catch them. They'll be retrieving their lures over top of them. The fish will be suspended off a point in the mid range depths, that is 10 to 20 feet down."

Another mistake sportsmen make

when fishing for this species is moving in too close to where the sandies are holding. While fishing with Greer on Claytor Lake, he and I watched as anglers repeatedly motored right up to a dock or a fallen tree.

"If they are fishing for largemouths, their boat is positioned about right," said the Newbern guide. "But if those fishermen are trying to catch a white, they have probably just anchored right over where the fish have suspended off that structure. They've also probably spooked any white bass that were in the area. Whites will relate to an object, but they won't hold as close to it as a bass."

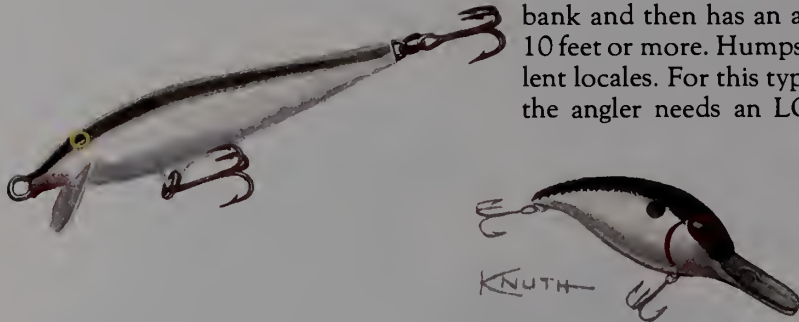
During the summer months, white bass become more nomadic. In this respect, sandies are similar to their close relatives—striped bass. Yet they can still be located near certain types of structure.

"In the summer, white bass will often relate to cover such as underwater ledges or sand bars," reveals Greer. "Again, they won't be holding as close to cover as bass. And if a school of shad comes by, the whites are much more apt to leave the area and go chasing after the bait fish. White bass will herd shad into a cove, a bay, or up



against a bank. They will just massacre those bait fish. That can be an ideal time for someone to fill up a livewell with whites."

Another good spot to look for summer sandies is a fast breaking drop-off. This could be in the form of a point that slopes gradually away from a bank and then has an abrupt drop of 10 feet or more. Humps are also excellent locales. For this type of structure, the angler needs an LCR to provide



data on the bottom below and to help pinpoint the fish. They may be on the top of a hump if it has at least five to 10 feet of water over it and if there is a brush or rock pile to provide cover. The white bass also could be found along the edges of the hump especially if there is deep water nearby that the fish can retreat to.

Greer employs a variety of lures when angling for sand bass. For surface feeders, he ties on 2½- to 3½-inch floating-diving Rebel or Rapala minnows, and retrieves them in a stop-go fashion. Storm's Wiggle Wart and Bomber Model A's in a shad pattern work well when the fish are from two to eight feet down. Smoke or white grubs and white jigs—all in the ¼- to ½-ounce size—can reach the whites when they are feeding at extreme depths.

There are also other ways to take this fish. Some outdoorsmen like to troll with deep diving minnow lures or with downriggers and small jigs. This tactic covers a great deal of water and when the angler finally comes across a school, he merely puts out a buoy and stays put until the action slows.

Another technique—used when the fish are striking short—is to remove the rear treble hooks from a minnow-like plug or a deep diving crankbait. A one to two foot leader with a white jig trailing is then attached to the rear screw eye of the artificial. And, finally,

a simple but effective bait is a minnow or a shad. These creatures are slowly drifted over likely silver bass holding areas.

The rod and reel is similarly important. Steve Greer favors baitcasting outfits spooled with clear 10 to 14-pound test line because he goes mostly after trophy-sized fish. Some anglers go light, preferring spinning rods with four to eight-pound test. The vast majority of white bass run between eight ounces and a pound. Regardless of your tackle, it's a good idea to set the hook twice because silvers are hard to hook due to their "bony" mouths. Greer also recommends that the lure be worked all the way back to a boat because white bass will often strike just when the lure is about to be pulled from the water.

Besides knowing how to fish for white bass, it is also important to be able to identify them correctly. Silvers are sometimes confused with striped bass and hybrid stripers. One of the easiest ways to distinguish sandies from the other two is that white bass have one tooth patch on their tongue while stripers and hybrids have two patches. Silvers also possess faint lateral stripes while the ones on stripers are dark. On hybrids, the lateral stripes are dark and broken. Correct identification can be critical because there is no size or creel limit on white bass (except on Lake Gaston where only 25 fish can be kept) while stripers and hybrids have strict size and creel limits.

Virginia has a number of outstanding white bass fisheries. Claytor Lake traditionally has been among the hot spots for this species, but other impoundments also have good populations. Smith Mountain, Leesville, South Holston, and Buggs Island all have fair to good concentrations of whites. And the annual spring spawning run up the South Fork of the Holston is famous throughout the state.

This year, consider fishing for white bass after the silver rush of early spring. You might find them lurking in places where you never expected them to be. □

Bruce Ingram is the Virginia editor for Outdoor Life magazine and a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.

Annual Report 1985-86

Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries

Boat Section—Fiscal Year 1985-86

		Total
New Registrations	16,069	
New Dealer Registrations	113	
New Livery Boat Registrations	109	
New Manufacturers	7	16,298
Transfer Registrations	15,493	
Transfer Livery Boat Registrations	23	15,516
Renewal Registrations	30,177	
Renewal Dealer Registrations	149	
Renewal Livery Boat Registrations	399	30,725
Duplicate Registrations	998	998
Titles	22,893	
Duplicate Titles	301	23,194
Total Transactions		86,731
Increase in Boat Registrations		
7/01/85	155,369	
6/30/86	161,384	6,015
Increase in Boat Titles		
7/01/85	94,548	
6/30/86	102,777	8,229

Expenditures July 1, 1985 - June 30, 1986

Administration	903,992.49
Law Enforcement	6,004,996.16
Education	1,175,032.80
Game & National Forest	2,970,986.98
Lands & Engineering	478,083.24
Fish	2,603,949.96
Boat	712,929.55
Nongame	456,440.71
Capital Outlay	1,931,786.82
Total	\$17,238,198.71

Income July 1, 1985 - June 30, 1986

Hunting, Fishing & Trapping License Fees	11,182,678.38
Federal Reimbursement Funds	3,961,354.30
Boat Registration & Titling Fees	853,008
Nongame Donations	440,737.67
Miscellaneous Revenues	371,763.18
Total	\$16,809,541.53

Annual Report 1985-86

Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's
Wildlife and Related Natural Resources
Commonwealth of Virginia
Gerald L. Baliles, Governor

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Administration

The 1985/86 fiscal year witnessed great progress in the area of data processing. New hardware and software were brought on-line. Concurrently, access to computing resources were extended to new areas of operation.

Education

The Education Division handles all the publications, video, and public outreach programs of the agency, along with the Boating Safety Education program. This year, several new publications were produced. "Virginia's Nectar Seekers" was a popular publication, with over 2,000 requests from the general public for it. The brochure describes the types of shrubbery and flowers that can be planted in Virginia's backyards to encourage hummingbirds and butterflies. A "Freshwater Fish Identification" booklet was also produced, designed to help the fisherman correctly identify fish in the field. "The Bobwhite Quail," a publication produced for the Game Division, details useful information on quail management for landowners in the state. A revised edition of the booklet, "Virginia's Endangered Species" was produced, which includes an update of the research being conducted with funds from the Nongame Tax Check-off program. *Virginia's Wildlife*, a colorful and popular book with schools and youngsters that identifies the mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish in Virginia, was also revised this year. A "Virginia Hunter's Guide" was featured in the September issue of *Virginia Wildlife*, and distributed separately to the general public and timber companies. The game and fish laws and boating regulations were all updated and distributed throughout the Commonwealth. Twelve issues of the monthly 36-page color magazine, *Virginia Wildlife* were produced, with a circulation reaching 55,000 during some months.

The division was also active with special projects this year. A poster was printed describing the workable plans for bird feeders and houses, and blaze orange posters were distributed throughout the state this fall, cautioning hunters to wear blaze orange before taking to the field.

Ten thousand posters were designed and distributed to game wardens alerting the public to the Commission's new P.H.O.N.E. program, which revolves around a hotline phone number to report wildlife violations. Seventy-five thousand P.H.O.N.E. stickers were

also produced and distributed. And 46,000 Sportsman's Calendars were designed, produced, and sold this year.

BOVA

BOVA (Biota of Virginia) is a computerized inventory system of the wildlife resources of Virginia.

More than 1,500 projects cross our desks at the Game Commission, requiring input regarding their impact on our wildlife resources. With BOVA, we have been able to access the latest scientific literature regarding the distribution and relative abundance of species in a given area. Thus, if a company proposes a development in an area where a rare or endangered species has been known to exist, we can quickly take the appropriate action.

During the past year, emphasis has been placed on developing training materials to help others use the system. We have also been busy reviewing and updating information on species already in the system, and developing ways to produce the information we have stored in a graphic way, through the use of a plotting system.

Game Division

Research

During the year, 48 research projects or special studies were conducted on both game and nongame species. Data collection efforts continued on species such as grouse, quail and rabbit. Bird hunters cooperated with research by donating grouse and quail wings which were used to determine the age structure of the 1985 fall populations. Special small game census routes were conducted statewide. An experimental ruffed grouse reintroduction program was started during the year, with 57 grouse trapped and relocated to Charles City County. Thirteen deer herd health checks were made statewide, and a study of deer nutrition in Southwestern Virginia continued. Studies on furbearers, doves, woodcock, wildlife habitat evaluation, hunter pressure, aquatic vegetation, and waterfowl banding were also accomplished this year.



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Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries

Wildlife Habitat Development

Wildlife habitat development and maintenance activities, designed to improve quality and diversity, were conducted on 2.3 million acres of land statewide. Approximately 60,194 wildlife food and cover trees and shrubs were planted and 43 waterholes and 102 nest structures were constructed. Almost 6,500 acres were mowed or otherwise controlled for vegetation growth.

Maintenance of 141 buildings, 29 dams and dikes, 13 bridges, and 218 roads was also accomplished during the year. Public use facilities, including camping sites, parking lots and restrooms were maintained and 2,097 wildlife management area signs were posted and 174 miles of boundary were marked. A total of 668 miles of roads and trails were kept maintained for public access.

Game Regulations and Harvest

A record number of 539 black bears and 121,730 deer were harvested by Virginia hunters in 1986. Game Division personnel operated 39 special checking stations statewide to gather information on the status of deer, bear and turkey in different regions of the state. Virginia hunters harvested 12,437 wild turkeys during the 1986 fall season, which represented an increase of 3,402 or 38% more than the 1985 harvest. This was the second highest fall turkey harvest ever recorded in Virginia. The 1986 spring gobbler

harvest established another record with a kill of 5,774 birds. This exceeded the previous spring record, set in 1985, by 1.6% or 94 gobblers.

Relocation and Stocking Efforts

Eighteen deer were darted at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant and released in Buchanan County and five turkeys were trapped on the Gathright WMA and released on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Division personnel responded to 30 bear damage complaints in 12 counties and 25 bears were trapped and relocated. Beaver complaints in 15 counties resulted in 48 beavers being caught and relocated.

Nongame Projects

Nongame and endangered species projects continued on the bald eagle, the Delmarva fox squirrel, endangered bat species, the peregrine falcon, colonial nesting birds, osprey populations, shorebirds, small mammals, barn owls, the loggerhead shrike, and two projects involving bird banding and breeding bird inventory. All of the nongame and endangered species studies were funded with the more than \$500,000 donated to the nongame check-off program this year and matching federal funding.

Data collected by the Game Division, or our research cooperators, indicated that the bald eagle enjoyed good production in 1986. Although down slightly from 1985, there were 66 active nests which fledged 83 young. Two eight-week-old eagles were given to North Carolina for restoration of the species in the coastal area of their state.

Monitoring of the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel continued both at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and at the Brownsville Plantation of The Nature Conservancy. Researchers checked 27 caves for endangered species of bats this year. The location of four additional caves containing endangered species were identified.

The hurricane in October of 1985 destroyed three peregrine falcon hawk towers; however, two were reconstructed during the winter and used by peregrines during the spring. Four pairs of peregrines nested in Virginia in 1986 and three were successful in pro-

ducing seven young. Five peregrine falcons were released at a site at Mount Rogers.

Surveys were conducted to census all known locations of colonial nesting birds. Eight new colonies of great blue herons were located, bringing the total to 36 sites involving 4,214 pairs of great blue herons. Great egret populations increased substantially within the last three years from 43 pairs in 1983 to 195 pairs in 1986. Several yellow-crowned night heron colonies have also been located and landowners are being given technical advice for the management of these herons.

Additional nongame studies were conducted on several species of terns, red-cockaded woodpeckers, ospreys in the Chesapeake Bay area, and on several species of plovers. Twenty-four trapping locations were used to collect 13 species of small mammals. Concern for declining barn owl numbers resulted in a study to determine the present day status of the barn owl. Cooperating researchers identified 214 nest and roost sites, and found that 43 of 111 historic nest sites were active in 1986. A total of 132 young were found in 51 active nests, with an average of 2.6 young per active nest.

Support for the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas, a project being conducted in cooperation with the Virginia Society of Ornithology, continued with 207 10-square mile blocks covered. Data from these surveys will be entered into the Commission's BOVA database. In addition to the Breeding Bird Survey, the division is supporting migratory bird banding on the Eastern Shore at the Kiptopeke banding site.

A special study was started to provide more information on the status and distribution of the endangered northern flying squirrel in Virginia.

Fish Division

Field biologists, working with the Corps of Engineers and the Soil Conservation Service, played a major role in the restoration of stream channels that were destroyed or relocated by the November floods. Two trout hatcheries, Montebello in Nelson County and



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Coursey Springs in Bath County were inundated with flood waters, permitting many trout to escape. Fortunately, after the water subsided, hatchery personnel recovered a considerable number of the escapees from nearby waters.

A large number of trout fishermen were surveyed to determine their perceptions of problems surrounding our trout stocking program. The results of this survey prompted some important changes in the program.

Probably the greatest change was advancing the season opening to 9 am on the third Saturday in March instead of the traditional opening at noon on the first Saturday in April. This move was prompted by the fact that strong stream flows in our trout streams exist only from December through May. The traditional April opening gave trout fishermen only a short period before water levels dropped and some streams became too low or too warm to hold trout. Moving the season ahead provides a few more weeks of good water conditions.

The response from the trout fishermen indicated considerable dissatisfaction with the policy of announcing the day streams were restocked. This practice has lead to crowding, jammed roadways and generally unpleasant and unsafe conditions. Because of this, a new policy of unannounced stocking was adopted. Certainly, local anglers who watch for the trucks will continue to have an advantage, but for trout fishermen in general this policy should

result in providing more equal opportunities to take trout.

The technique of using slot limits to manage smallmouth and largemouth bass has proven itself. It has been successful for largemouth bass on Lake Chesdin and tests on the North Fork of the Shenandoah have proven that the slot limit produces more large fish than either the no limit or the 12-inch limit regulations tried previously. The slot limit, in the case of smallmouth bass, protects the best predators and spawners, between 11 and 14 inches, but permits the taking of smaller and larger fish.

Back Bay continues to be a problem. The die-off of the milfoil in the bay left nothing to stabilize the bottom, allowing the wind to stir up bottom sediments making the water extremely murky. This creates a Catch 22 situation where the water is too murky to permit weed growth, and there are no weeds to hold the bottom sediments to keep the water clear. Aquatic plants have been planted, but the results are not promising. Sampling in the bay finds a strong dominance of brackish and salt water fish and no signs of reproduction by freshwater fish.

Channel catfish fry were in short supply this year. Blue catfish were substituted in our stocking program. The King and Queen Hatchery produced over 300,000 blues, which can attain substantial size. This hatchery also produced four million walleye eggs which were distributed to rearing ponds at other hatcheries in the state.

Tiny Burke Lake in Fairfax County was trap netted, collecting 70 muskellunge for hatchery propagation. Over 600,000 eggs were extracted from these fish which ranged from 16 to 39 inches in length.

Some important research was also conducted during the year. The first phase of a survey of all of the Commonwealth's warm water streams was completed. This project will require several years.

Top five lakes in 1986 for selected species; ranked according to the number of citation fish recorded:

Largemouth Bass

Lake Anna
Lake Gaston

Occoquan Reservoir
Buggs Island Lake
Chickahominy River

Smallmouth Bass

James River
New River
Smith Mountain Lake
Rappahannock River
Claytor Lake

Crappie

Buggs Island Lake
James River
Lake Gaston
Lake Anna
Smith Mountain Lake

Rock Bass

Nottoway River
Pigg River
Falling River
New River
Blackwater River

Sunfish

Lake Prince
Lake Western Branch
Northwest River
Lake Burnt Mills
Lake Powell

White Bass

Claytor Lake
Buggs Island Lake
Smith Mountain Lake
South Holston Reservoir
New River

Striped Bass

Smith Mountain Lake
Lake Gaston
Buggs Island Lake
Leesville Reservoir
Lake Anna

Muskellunge

New River
Burke Lake
James River
Smith Mountain Lake
Clinch River

Walleye

Smith Mountain Lake
Buggs Island Lake
Lake Whitehurst
Claytor Lake
Philpott Lake



New State Fish Records January-December 1986

Smallmouth Bass: 7 lbs. 7 oz. caught in New River

Rock Bass: 2 lbs. 2 oz. caught in Laurel Bed Lake

Sunfish: 4 lbs. 12 oz. caught in a private pond

White Bass: 3 lbs. 15 oz. caught in John Flannagan Reservoir

Channel Catfish: 28 lbs. 8 oz. caught in a private pond

Blue Catfish: 38 lbs. 8 oz. caught in the Rappahannock River

Flathead Catfish: 54 lbs. 8 oz. caught in the Occoquan Reservoir

Rainbow Trout: 12 lbs. 9 oz. caught in a private pond

Muskie: 34 lbs. 8 oz. caught in Smith Mountain Lake

Northern Pike: 24 lbs. 6 oz. caught in Hungry Mother Lake

Yellow Perch: 2 lbs. 2 oz. caught in the New River

Gar: 21 lbs. 12 oz. caught in the Kerr Reservoir

Carp: 49 lbs. 4 oz. caught in Lake Prince

Lands and Engineering

The Lands and Engineering Division administers the Game Commission's program for buying land, constructing facilities, and maintaining boat ramps. Major efforts this year included a push to rebuild agency-owned dams to suit the State Dam Safety Program, restore damaged or destroyed boat ramps and fish hatcheries after the floods that occurred in various parts of the state in August and November 1985, and fol-

low through on plans to construct fishways through two dams on the James River in Richmond. A handout, "Building Boat Ramps," was prepared to aid with the many questions received about this program.

During the fiscal year, six pieces of land totaling 203.4 acres were deeded to the Game Commission in five counties and cities. On June 30, 1986, Game Commission holdings totaled 179,336 acres.

The Engineering Section of the division completed 25 construction or engineering projects in 21 counties and cities at a total cost of \$2,259,473. Fifteen projects continued or were started with estimated costs totaling \$2,291,000. These projects should be completed in 1986-87. Another 26 projects were planned with estimated costs totalling \$2,446,000.

As of June 30, 1986, the Engineering Section was responsible for 169 boat access areas in 70 counties and cities. In addition, several new boating access sites were constructed.

Overall, major boat landing repair costs totaled \$104,409, while small repairs at 15 landings totaled \$7,929, groundskeeping activities at 73 landings totaled \$30,437, and replacement signs totaled \$3,515 for a total boat landing maintenance cost of \$146,290 or \$866 per site.

Other activities during the year included the construction and renovation of several dams. The dam at 800-acre Briery Creek Lake in Prince Edward County was completed. Except for a few minor items, the dam at 110-acre Frederick County Lake was also completed. Major repairs to the dam and spillways at Lake Robertson in Rockbridge County neared completion.

Law Enforcement

In 1986, the Game Commission employed 155 wardens with full police powers.

As of June 30, 1986, the division recorded 13,148 arrests, including

3,568 game, 6,365 fish and 2,560 boating violations. The establishment of a new hotline this year has given the public access to this agency to report wildlife violations, and has resulted in 600 calls and many valid tips and leads for our officers.

The division also has three aircraft. All three have been used successfully in dealing with violations.

The division purchased a 25-ft. boat with the necessary electronic equipment for big water operations. This gives us enforcement capacity over the Chesapeake Bay, and on the sea side of the Eastern Shore.

Considerable time was given to enforcing striped bass regulations. In addition, the undercover operation of wildlife enforcement resulted in the arrest of several people involved in the commercialization of wildlife.

During the hunting season, business for game wardens picks up. In November of 1985, for example, wardens in one of six districts patrolled 49,173 miles and inspected 2,221 hunters while working 3,645 hours. Hunting accidents during the 1986-87 season totaled 83, with 13 fatalities. The leading cause of these accidents was the victim being mistaken for game.

During the summer of 1986, Virginia hosted the 21st Annual Conference of the North American Association of Hunter Safety Coordinators in Williamsburg. In addition, the Virginia Hunter Education Program trained 19,795 people during 1985-86, bringing the total trained since 1962 to 377,145. The program has some 898 volunteer and game warden instructors who conduct the 10-hour course throughout the Commonwealth. Of course, this training will be mandatory for all first time hunters and those 16 years of age and under after July 1, 1988.

Some 200 youngsters received advanced training through their involvement with the State Hunter Education Championship. And, several staff and volunteer instructors worked with NRA and Boy Scout leaders to conduct a hunter activity trail for the Boy Scout Jamboree held at Ft. A.P. Hill.

Restoring the Bobwhite

The Game Commission has produced a 36-page informational handbook on the bobwhite quail. *Virginia's Bobwhite Quail* discusses the status of the bird in the state, its nature and needs, and how to manage farmlands and woodlands to increase its numbers. In addition, the book explains the failures of early attempts at stocking quail, at predator control, and emergency winter feeding. This handbook should prove useful to those concerned about increasing quail populations in the state. Write for a free copy of the handbook to: Virginia Game Commission, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

In addition, Quail Unlimited and Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee, Florida have collaborated on a practical, easy-to-understand management handbook for bobwhite quail called *Bobwhite Quail Management: A Habitat Approach*. The 40-page soft-cover handbook, illustrated with over 25 photos and illustrations covers the progression of quail management and the life history of the Southern bobwhite, stressing the habitat requirements necessary for healthy populations throughout the year. Quail diets, establishing food and cover plots, creating valuable "edge," seasonal prescribed burns are all detailed in this how-to book written for the quail hunter and conservationist.

All proceeds from the sale of this book will go towards quail management. Tall Timbers will use its share to fund badly needed research projects, and Quail Unlimited will use its money to concentrate primarily on actual quail habitat projects. The handbook can be ordered for \$5.00 (it is a tax-deductible contribution) from: Quail Unlimited, P.O. Box 10041, Augusta, GA 30903. □

Tim Wright



Problems at Boat Ramps

The Game Commission has been experiencing a new and rather perplexing maintenance problem at its public boat ramps. Recently, we have been spending a great deal of our time answering telephone calls (especially on Monday mornings after beautiful weekends) concerning public boat ramps with broken-off ends or ramps with holes in them.

Our Lands and Engineering Division began repairing these ramps by placing riprap at the end of ramps and trying to fill in the voids—not an easy job when you're working in three feet of water. And although an initial riprap repair is not expensive, once the repairs began to be repeated to the same ramps over and over again, the money began to add up, and we began to wonder what was happening to our ramps.

It turns out that boat owners have been unknowingly misusing the ramps. The majority of our ramps were built for the launching and retrieval of boats that are floated off boat trailers and pulled back on with the use of hand-operated or electric winch. Of course, nowadays, boat owners are using the

popular drive-on boat trailers, and it turns out that the prop wash from boats that are being loaded improperly is eroding the base materials from underneath these older ramps. The gravel, sand and other debris over time can weaken the concrete to such a point that the ends of the ramps actually break off, and large holes begin to make their way into the ends of the ramps.

It's not hard to take care of this problem. Boat owners with drive on trailers simply need to back their trailers into the water just a couple of inches more to cut down on the amount of thrust needed to load their boats. The less thrust needed to load a boat, the less erosion occurs at the end of ramps.

Anyone who has ever dropped a trailer wheel into a hole on a ramp will appreciate this sound advice. Pass the word on! And be sure to let our agency know of any damages to any of our ramps during the year. Think safe, and happy boating! □

Letters

Deer and Dogs

In the February issue appeared a letter pertaining to deer hunting with dogs. The writer of the letter said, "it is strange no hunting fatalities were east of the Blue Ridge". This letter is definitely inaccurate. On December 26, a Page County man was shot and killed three miles south of Sperryville, "east of the Blue Ridge" while deer hunting, according to the *Page News and Courier*.

P.E. Jones
Charlottesville

Mountain Lions

I enjoyed the February article about mountain lions.

In 1943 I was spending a couple of days at a hunting camp in Center County, Pa. It was located four miles from the main road.

One evening about 10:00 pm a

friend and I were leaving the camp, and as we approached a small ford we saw a mountain lion in the middle of the road. It stood broadside for several minutes. We drove approximately a thousand feet, and at the second ford we saw another mountain lion. It also stood broadside for several seconds.

That fall a mountain lion was killed near the main road by some coon hunters.

I am acquainted with the mountain lion as my dad has a tanned hide.

I often think how lucky I was to have seen the lions.

Alfred Benner
Alexandria

I am writing in reference to the cougar article in the February, 1987 magazine.

During the period of 1940-42, there were countless people living in the St. Paul, Bull Run and Sandy Ridge areas of Wise County, and the Moorefield section of Russell County (near St. Paul), who heard the screaming of a panther.

For three nights in a row, one followed my mother and sister, who were bringing our cow home for milking. This was the Gray Hill Flats area. It was in the fall, dusky dark, and they could see a large panther overhead, moving from tree to tree until they reached a clearing. It made growling or coughing sounds. They and the cow were terrified. The fourth night, my mother and I came home from a different direction, and saw nothing. Soon afterwards, we had visitors and they reported the screaming as their car reached the area near the electric power station. As they were telling us, we all heard this blood-curdling screaming—like a woman in labor, only very, very loud. There were 9 or 10 of us present. It went into the Austin Hollow area and all our neighbors heard it. Later that night it was heard in the Hardy Hollow area, and also there on other nights. Everyone was talking about it at school the next day. Several men from downtown St. Paul came to our house

the next day, and asked my mother about it. Some had guns and they searched the Austin and Hardy Hollows, but didn't see or hear it.

My husband says the screams were heard several times in the Bull Run area (between St. Paul and Coeburn) about this same time. My relatives on Sandy Ridge (near St. Paul) heard it a few times.

I was in St. Paul recently, and mentioned your article to a friend, who said during this same period, many of the folks around Moorefield heard it on a nearby mountain. He said it came every October for about three years or so.

During the mid-sixties, some animal bounded over the fence around my family's dog lot, killed our aged dog, ate a portion of it, and covered the rest of it. We buried it of course. The fence was about three feet high. No one heard anything that night.

It is certainly true, once you've heard this scream, you will *never* forget it.

I feel certain some folks in these areas will remember this, though many of the older folks have died, and some have moved away.

Mrs. Georgia Kilgore Lawson
Leicester, N.C.

Litter

As I spend my time in the outdoors I see more and more litter. There is a saying that the only thing you should leave in the woods is your footprints. This is a simple rule to follow.

Last summer my six-year-old son and I were fishing on the Rappahannock River. The litter was so bad that my son asked me why people litter. I told him they just don't have respect for the environment.

Thanks to the destruction of personal property, the relations between landowners and sportsmen have just about been demolished. At the present rate there will be more posted signs on the trees than leaves. I can remember

several years ago when Continental Can sent out a memo to people holding their hunting permits about the problem of litter and damage to their lands. But, the problem continues. Just take a ride down one of our roads and notice the trash and shot up road signs. We say that a handful spoils it for everyone. It's taking more than a handful to do this much damage. I don't know the answer to the problem, but the Virginia sportsmen are going to have to become more aware of this problem and do something about it.

Eugene A. Gregg, Jr.
Woodbridge

Trout Stocking Change

I am writing in concern of the unannounced trout stocking. How can you feel that this is fair for the people who work and the other school kids who have been taking off a few hours from school to go fishing? What this means is that the people who don't work can sit and watch for the stocking. There won't be hardly any left by the time other people find out when the streams were stocked. And don't think that there will be fish two or three days later. I have fished all my life with my dad and we know that the chances of getting anything two or three days later are very slim.

I know that there are other people who feel the same way. There is nothing like the feeling of wrestling with the frisky trout after they have been just put in. The challenge is such a great feeling. But now that challenge is being taken away from us.

I know it doesn't matter, but I have a feeling that there will be less trout stamps sold within the state.

Sherry Richards (Age 15)
Syria

We appreciate receiving your comments concerning our decision to discontinue announcing trout stocking dates. This change is not intended to be unfair to those who work or attend school during the day. In fact, by not announcing stocking dates,

fishing will be better over a longer time period and no longer will it be necessary to take off school or work in order to get a fair opportunity to catch trout.

I am certain many anglers accustomed to our past stocking procedures feel strongly that most trout will be creeled within a day or two of stocking. However, studies in other states where similar changes have been implemented have consistently shown that good fishing will be available for at least two weeks after stocking. It is true that fish will be more dispersed and, therefore, require more effort to catch. But this extra effort will add to the challenge, make people better fishermen and ultimately increase your enjoyment of the sport of trout fishing.

To date, fishermen response to this change has been overwhelmingly favorable. Other states have shown dramatic increases in trout license sales as a result of such changes and we expect an increased interest in our stocked trout program.

Larry O. Mohn
District Fisheries Biologist

Afield and Afloat in Virginia

by Jack Randolph

I like to think of May as the month of the fly rod. This is the time of year when bream and bass commence to look toward the roof of their world for supper. It's the time when smallmouths move into the shallows and when those smarter trout, those that didn't fall for earlier offerings of marshmallows, corn and cheese, look for something that crawls or flies. This is the month when those of us who tie flies can bring them to the water for their final examination, to see if they pass the inspection of the finny critics for which they were created.

As long as fly fishing has been around (and that is a long, long time) it's a wonder that more fishermen haven't taken up this form of fishing. There seems to be some sort of mystique surrounding fly fishing that scares off many anglers. Actually there's nothing about fly fishing that the average fellow can't master quickly if he has a balanced fly fishing outfit.

Just recently, in one of the fishing classes I hold each winter, I asked the class to help me assemble a theoretical fly fishing outfit. I asked, "What do we buy first?" Everyone agreed that we should purchase the rod first. Following the rod, the class wanted to buy the reel and then, almost as an afterthought, they allowed that we needed a line. There were stunned expressions when I announced that we had just bought our outfit completely backwards.

When assembling a fly fishing outfit, one must first decide what kind of fly fishing one intends to do. Our choices in Virginia could include casting poppers for bream and bass, fly fishing for trout on the larger streams, or stalking tiny brook trout in heavily brushed, step across streams in the mountains. You may even wish to test your talents on salt water. But, each type of fishing demands different fly fishing tackle.

Let's, for example, decide that we are going to cast cork-bodied bream and bass bugs with our fly fishing outfit. These flies have a great deal of air resistance, so we must have a line that will carry these bulky lures to their target. The fly lines designed for this type of work are tapered with most of the weight at the forward end. They are called "weight forward," "Bug taper," "torpedo taper" or some other descriptive name. Also, fly lines used with floating flies should float, so we know now that we need a weight forward floating line.

Fly lines come in various weights ranging from the lightest, size 1 to size 12. My experience favors a size 8 for bream and bass bugs, but someone could recommend a 7 or a 9 with equal validity. So, now we have defined the line to be a weight forward (WF), size 8 floating line. The code on the box would say WF-8-F.

One reason the fly line is numbered is to indicate its weight which should balance to the fly rod. Modern fly rods are marked on the shaft, just above the handle to indicate the weight lines they can accommodate.

The choice of a reel for bass fishing is strictly a matter of choice. Any reel that balances well and holds the size line used will do. Automatic reels offer some advantages, but they are very heavy.

There are, of course, various tapers of fly lines available. There are also lines that sink or simply have tips that sink. The object of this short article is to introduce you to fly fishing equipment. A good tackle shop proprietor can help you, once you ask the right questions.

Another problem involves leaders, but we'll address this one at another time. If you want to explore fly fishing further, visit your local library and check out a book on the subject, perhaps one such as *Fly Fishing* by Joe Brooks. I would like to close with one word of warning, however. Once you discover the possibilities, fly fishing can be catching. □

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The Green Lynx Spider

story and photo
by Kerry Givens

W · I · L · D · L · I · F · E

The best way to go unnoticed in the world of nature is to be green. Insects figured that out a few million years ago. The average patch of vegetation literally crawls with insects, and most of them live in constant danger of being devoured by countless predators. So being the same color as the vegetation has obvious survival value for bugs. Judging from the variety of green insects, the strategy must work: Virginia has green beetles, green grasshoppers and katydids, green bees, lots of green caterpillars, and even a green moth or two.

What surprises me is how few predators are green. The praying mantis comes to mind, and the rough green snake provides another example. But is their green coloration supposed to conceal them from wary prey, or mask themselves from still larger predators? Or both?

Enter my favorite green predator, the green lynx spider. In a world filled with little brown, mottled spiders, this one is undeniably green—in fact, both parts of its scientific name, *Peucetia viridans*, mean “green.” Found throughout the state, it is most commonly encountered in shrubby fields. Good-sized as spiders go, this one is fairly easy to spot. As if to flaunt its camouflage, the green lynx often perches spread-eagle atop an exposed leaf. There it lies in wait for pass-

ing prey. Rather than subduing its prey in a silken web, this spider is a raptorial hunter; it captures with its legs and fangs alone, much like the feline it is named after. And its tastes are cosmopolitan. I have seen it feasting on hapless bees, wasps, other spiders, and even butterflies.

Although a voracious predator, the green lynx is harmless to man. One researcher has reported that

the spider can spit droplets of venom when menaced by human fingers, but no ill effects have resulted from contact with skin. However, a 1946 report in the *Bulletin of the U.S. Army Medical Department* tells of an unlucky recruit who was sprayed in the eye with green lynx venom. Severe irritation and two days of impaired vision resulted.

Mating takes place in the summer months. The ritual

is unique among spiders. After a few minutes of waving legs at one another, the male and female drop from a leaf on parallel silken strands, mating in mid-air. Then they ascend, often repeating this aerial ballet several more times. Some observers have suggested that the male concludes by depositing a glue-like plug on the female, believed to act as a sort of chastity belt lest other suitors appear.

Mated females encase a few dozen bright orange eggs in a silken capsule. The finished eggcase is then suspended from vegetation on a few guylines of web. Presumably, the eggs are thus inaccessible to ants and other predators. The expectant mother closely guards her clutch, often clinging to the egg sac itself until hatching. She even assists in birth, shearing the capsule open to release the newly-hatched spiderlings.

Not too crazy about spiders? I guess I can sympathize. I'm still terrified by the thought of finding a black widow or brown recluse in one of my shoes. But my spider phobia disappears when I'm watching beautiful green lynx spiders. I forget about those blacks and browns. The greens chase my blues away. □

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